



US Army Corps
of Engineers.

SAN FRANCISCO DISTRICT

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Regulatory Branch
333 Market Street

San Francisco, CA 94105-2197

PROJECT MANAGER: Philip Shannin TELEPHONE: (415) 977-8445 Email: pshannin@smtp.spd.usace.army.mil

1. Introduction: The City of South San Francisco (through their agent Skid Hall, 500 Airport Boulevard, Suite 350, Burlingame, CA 94010, phone 650-548-1656) has applied for a Department of the Army permit to permanently fill 0.68 acre of wetlands, located at the Bayshore Boulevard southbound off-ramp from U.S. Highway 101, near the Oyster Point interchange, in the City of South San Francisco, San Mateo County, California. This application is being processed pursuant to the provisions of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1344).

2. Project Description: As shown in the attached drawings, the applicant plans to construct hook ramps from U.S. 101 to Bayshore Boulevard adjacent to the lower slopes of San Bruno Mountain. The ramps would accommodate southbound on and off movements to and from the freeway. Bayshore Boulevard would be realigned farther west to allow provision of 90-degree curves on both ramps and to increase the distance between the highway off-ramp and Bayshore Boulevard intersection.

The interchange improvements will reconfigure the existing exit from a slip-ramp interchange with stop-sign control (also referred to as a scissors ramp) to a hook-ramp interchange with signal control. Modifications include a new entrance ramp to Bayshore Boulevard, the addition of three traffic signals along Bayshore Boulevard, and the installation of complete Ramp Metering/Traffic Operations System for the southbound US 101/Bayshore Boulevard hook entrance ramp. Bayshore Boulevard will be realigned to the west to accommodate the proposed hook ramps. It will also be widened to provide a typical cross-section of two

through lanes in each direction plus turn lanes. There is one lane northbound past the northern signalized intersection, conforming to the existing roadway. The hook ramps require the placement of approximately 12,000 cubic yards of fill material on jurisdictional areas. The fill will consist of engineered and compacted clean road base materials and pavement. The project also requires the construction of a concrete retaining wall and concrete roadway barriers.

The hook ramps project requires adjustments, modifications, temporary relocations, and permanent relocations of existing utility systems. Many of these utilities are significant facilities of regional importance. Impacted utility systems within the project limits include Pacific Gas and Electric Company transmission, distribution, and remote telemetry facilities for power and gas systems; Pacific Bell and AT&T telephone lines; telecommunications facilities by MCI/WorldCom, RCN, and other providers; Caltrans lighting and traffic monitoring systems; City of South San Francisco sanitary sewer, storm drain, street lighting, and traffic signal systems; California Water Service Company water lines; and City of San Francisco water lines.

3. State Approvals: The applicant states that he has notified the Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Francisco Region, to determine the need for regional water quality certification. If the Regional Water Resources Control Board determines that this project is consistent with the California Water Quality Control Plan, requirements adopted by the Regional Board, and Sections 301, 302, 303, 306 and 307 of the Clean Water Act, the State will issue a Certificate of Conformance with Water Quality

Standards to the project proponent. Those parties concerned with any water quality problems that may be associated with this project should write to the Executive Officer, California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Francisco Bay Region, 1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400, Oakland, California 94612.

4. Environmental Assessment: The Corps of Engineers has assessed the environmental impacts of the action proposed in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (Public Law 91-190), and pursuant to Council on Environmental Quality's Regulations, 40 CFR 1500-1508, and Corps of Engineers' Regulations, 33 CFR 230 and 325, Appendix B. Unless otherwise stated, the Preliminary Environmental Assessment describes only the impacts (direct, indirect, and cumulative) resulting from activities within the jurisdiction of the Corps of Engineers. The supporting data used in the preparation of this Preliminary Environmental Assessment are on file in the South Section, Regulatory Branch, Corps of Engineers, 333 Market Street, San Francisco, California.

The Preliminary Environmental Assessment resulted in the following findings:

a. IMPACTS ON THE AQUATIC ECOSYSTEM

(1) Physical/Chemical Characteristics and Anticipated Changes

Substrate – The proposed project will permanently alter the existing substrate, consisting of 0.68 acre of wetlands. This area will be filled and paved to construct the hook ramps. This will result in a major, long-term impact to substrate.

Drainage Patterns – The impacted wetlands currently collect drainage water from upslope drainages. These waters will continue to flow into the remaining wetlands on site, as well as into the adjacent created wetlands.

Flood Control Function of Wetland – The remaining and created wetlands on site are expected to provide adequate flood control. In addition, the hook ramps shall contain storm drains, to remove excess water beyond the wetland storage capacity.

Erosion/Sedimentation Rate – This project is not expected to lead to any long-term impacts on erosion, since no steep banks surround the new hook ramps. Short-term erosion may occur, if adequate erosion control measures are not taken. Specific measures to reduce these impacts will be outlined in the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). The potential for erosion will exist until the project is complete.

Water Quality – Filling and construction activities may impact water quality. Effects may include incidental leakage of oil, gas, and hydraulic fluids from heavy equipment and sedimentation. Proper implementation of the SWPPP will minimize these effects, leading to short-term impacts that are minor in magnitude.

(2) Biological Characteristics and Anticipated Changes

Wetlands (Special Aquatic Site) – The proposed hook ramps will result in the unavoidable filling of 0.68 acre of willow-dominated wetlands. These wetlands comprise approximately half of the 1.05 acre of wetlands, located adjacent to the current Bayshore Boulevard. The loss of these wetlands is a major long-term negative impact. However, this impact shall be mitigated, through the creation of 0.57 acre of willow dominated wetlands and 0.72 acre of seep wetlands.

Endangered Species – Three federally listed endangered species of butterflies are known to exist at various locations on San Bruno Mountain, the mission blue butterfly (*Icaria icariodes missionensis*), the San Bruno elfin butterfly (*Incisalia fotis bayensis*), and the callippe silverspot butterfly (*Speyeria callippe callippe*). The proposed location

of the hook ramps and created wetlands, however, do not contain suitable habitat for these species, due to a lack of appropriate food plants. Therefore, the Corps has determined that this project shall have no effect upon these species.

Habitat for Fish, Other Aquatic Organisms, and Wildlife – The impacted wetland provides low value for wildlife, due to traffic fumes, road runoff, high noise, debris collection, and human intrusion. Therefore, the project will create a minor, long-term, negative impact on wildlife. This impact, however, shall be mitigated by wetland creation on site.

b. IMPACTS ON RESOURCES OUTSIDE THE AQUATIC ECOSYSTEM

(1) Physical Characteristics and Anticipated Changes

Air Quality - Project activity would have minor, short-term impacts on air quality in the vicinity of the project site. Based on the relatively minor size of the proposed project, limited to an evaluation of air quality impacts only within Corps of Engineers' (Corps) jurisdictional areas, the Corps has determined that the total direct and non-direct project emissions would not exceed the de minimis threshold levels of 40 CFR 93.153. Therefore, the proposed project would conform to the State Air Quality Implementation Plan (SIP) for California.

Noise Conditions – Construction activity would have minor, short term impacts on the ambient noise levels in the project site vicinity. However, once constructed, the new on-ramp is expected to increase rush hour traffic volumes by 1%, along the adjacent stretch of Highway 101. This increase will create a minor, long-term increase in noise levels.

Geologic Conditions – Construction of the proposed hook ramps would require removal of native vegetation and cutting into bedrock and cover sediments. This could produce long-term negative impacts unless appropriate measures are taken. To

prevent this, the City would implement mitigation measures, which include an erosion control plan, the use of engineered fill, and soil compaction. Therefore, this project is expected to have only a minor, short-term impact on geology.

(2) Socioeconomic Characteristics and Anticipated Changes

Aesthetic Quality – The project aesthetics will be typical of a modern highway project. The site will be landscaped in a manner typical of highway projects and will replace an old deteriorated highway intersection.

Economics and Employment – The project will provide construction jobs at all skill levels. The completed project will benefit the local economy by providing more efficient and safer ingress and egress to the City of South San Francisco.

Traffic and Safety – The existing US 101/Bayshore Boulevard exit-ramp diverge is currently operating at a deficient condition during peak hours. The level of service (LOS) at the stop-controlled intersection at Bayshore Boulevard and the southbound exit ramp operates at LOS C in the AM peak hour. Queues from this intersection occasionally impede flow on the US 101 mainline, creating a dangerous situation both for the mainline traffic and those waiting to exit the freeway. The local traffic requirements are in conflict with the through traffic using the US 101 corridor. The existing stop-control and scissors ramp configuration constrains the volume of traffic that can exit southbound US 101 and travel along Bayshore Boulevard creating another dangerous situation. Unless the bottleneck is corrected, traffic delays, backups, and hazardous conditions will continue to occur and are expected to become more severe, due to future traffic growth.

By 2020, without the hook ramp project, one intersection in the Oyster Point interchange would be operating unacceptably during the AM peak hour, and four would be operating unacceptably during the

PM peak hour. With the hook ramp project, no intersections would be operating unacceptably during the AM peak hour, and only two intersections would be operating unacceptably during the PM peak hour. At the remaining unacceptable intersections, conditions would be better with the project than without it, due to the removal of traffic from all major intersections within the interchange. Overall, the hook ramp project would benefit operation at most major intersections within the Oyster Point interchange.

The hook ramps are required to bring the 2020 A.M. peak hour ramp diverge to LOS E and the P.M. peak to LOS F and to remove the traffic hazards caused by the existing off ramps. The LOS F conditions would be related to the high traffic volumes on the mainline freeway, and would not be caused by the design or operations of the off ramp.

(4) Historic - Cultural Characteristics and Anticipated Changes

A prehistoric archeological site, CA-Sma-40, is located in close proximity to the proposed hook ramps. The design plan for this project includes construction of a retaining wall adjacent to this site. The wall will act as a dividing line, with all project construction happening on the downslope side of the wall, with the archeological site on the upslope side of the wall. Therefore, the Corps has determined that the archeological site is not within the project area and shall not be affected by the project.

c. SUMMARY OF INDIRECT IMPACTS

None have been identified.

d. SUMMARY OF CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

None have been identified.

e. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on an analysis of the above identified impacts, a preliminary determination has been made that it will not be necessary to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the subject permit application. The Environmental Assessment for the proposed action has, however, not yet been finalized and this preliminary determination may be reconsidered if additional information is developed.

5. Alternatives Analysis: Evaluation of this activity's impacts will include application of the guidelines promulgated by the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency under Section 404(b) of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1344(b)).

6. Public Interest Evaluation: The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impacts, including cumulative impacts, of the proposed activity and its intended use on the public interest. Evaluation of the probable impacts the proposed activity may have on the public interest requires a careful weighing of all those factors, which become relevant in each particular case. The benefits, which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal, must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. The decision whether to authorize a proposal, and if so the conditions under which it will be allowed to occur, are therefore determined by the outcome of the general balancing process. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. All factors and their cumulative impacts must be considered, relevant to the proposal. These factors include conservation; economics; aesthetics; general environmental concerns; wetlands; cultural values; fish and wildlife values; flood hazards; floodplain values; land use; navigation; shore erosion and accretion; recreation; water supply and conservation; water quality; energy needs; safety; food and fiber production; mineral needs; considerations of property ownership and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

7. Consideration of Comments: The Corps of Engineers is soliciting comments from the public, Federal, State and local agencies and officials, Indian Tribes, and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps of Engineers to determine whether to issue, modify, condition or deny a permit for this proposal. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment and/or an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

8. Submission of Comments: Interested parties may submit, in writing, any comments concerning this activity. Comments should include the applicant's name, the number and the date of this Notice and should be forwarded so as to reach this office within the comment period specified on page one of this Notice. Comments should be sent to: Regulatory Branch, Attention: Philip Shannin. It is Corps policy to forward any such comments which include objections to the applicant for resolution or rebuttal. Any person may also request, in writing, within the comment period of this Notice that a public hearing be held to consider this application. Requests for public hearings shall state, with particularity, the reasons for holding a public hearing. Additional details may be obtained by contacting the applicant whose address is indicated in the first paragraph of this Notice, or by contacting Philip Shannin of our office at telephone (415) 977-8445. Details on any changes of a minor nature made in the final permit action will be provided on request.